

# HOW TO RESPOND WHEN DISASTER STRIKES.....

FIRE

POWER OUTAGE

WATER DAMAGE

( TO ADD TEMPORARY WATER  
INTERRUPTION)

# FIRE

Determining the extent of fire and smoke damage is very difficult. Look for the following to determine the extent of damage, what can be salvaged, and what must be discarded.

**-Exposure to excessive heat.** Food in cans or jars may appear to be okay, but if they've been close to the heat of a fire, they may no longer be edible. Heat from a fire can activate food spoilage bacteria. If the heat is extreme, the cans or jars themselves can split or rupture.

**-Physical damage from falling debris.**

**-Lack of refrigeration.** See Power Outage

**-Water damage from fire fighting activities.** See Water Damage  
Note: be alert for possible pollution from non-potable water used in fire fighting.

**-Residual from possible toxic fire extinguishing materials.** Ask fire officials about this issue.

**-Chemical Contamination.** May be caused by electrical insulation, cooling chemicals, leaking transformers, and breakage of bottles of pesticides and cleaning supplies.

**-Smoke damage and toxic fumes.** One of the most dangerous elements of a fire may be the toxic fumes released from burning materials. Fumes can contaminate food. Any type of food stored in permeable packaging- cardboard, plastic wrap, screw-topped jars and bottles, etc.- should be thrown away. Discard any raw foods stored outside the refrigerator. Food stored in refrigerators or freezers can also become contaminated by fumes. Smoke can be carried inside refrigeration units by the circulating fans on the unit. Loosely covered or poorly sealed food display cases can easily be infiltrated by smoke.

All equipment, floors, walls, and ceilings must be cleaned and sanitized.

Detention: All items that are questionable should be tagged with instructions to segregate and hold.

Instruct the facility to keep a log of all food that is discarded. Secure the damaged merchandise until disposal. Send to an approved disposal site. Keep receipt of disposal.

# POWER OUTAGE

It is often difficult to determine if foods are safe or if they must be discarded. Use the following to help make the determination:

- The principal issues for an inspection after a power outage are time and temperature. How long was the power out, and what were the resultant temperatures:
- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed. A full freezer may stay at freezing temperatures about two days, a half-full freezer about 1 day.
- Keep a thermometer in each refrigeration unit. Read the temperature when the power comes back on. Once thawed, frozen food may not be refrozen. Partial thawing and re-freezing may reduce the quality of some food.
- Refrigerated food should be safe as long as power is out no more than four hours. Keep the door closed. Discard any perishable food (meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, milk, leftovers, etc.) that has been above 41 degrees F for two hours. See the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) website for a list of foods to save/discard: [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov)
- Foods that may be safe if held above 41 degrees for over two hours include: hard cheeses, margarine, fruit juices, catsup, mustard, breads and cakes, and raw vegetables.
- Never taste foods to determine their safety.
- Detention: All items that are questionable should be tagged with instructions to segregate and hold.
- Instruct the facility to keep a log of all food that is discarded. Secure the damaged merchandise until disposal. Send to an approved disposal site. Keep a receipt of disposal.

# WATER DAMAGE

All water, regardless of its source must be considered to be a pollutant because it may contain sewage, disease-causing organisms, and unknown chemicals.

Water damage can be caused by:

- Excessive rainfall and melting snow
- Broken pipes and overflowing water mains
- Sewer backups
- Leaking roofs
- Activated sprinkler systems and fire-fighting operations

Check the walls and products for water residue, debris, and a high-water mark. A high-water mark is usually a well-defined dark line. Product stacked above the high-water line may be free of contamination.

**Discard** the following foods that come into contact with floodwaters:

- Unwrapped foods
- Single-service items-paper products, meat trays, etc.
- Packaged foods that are not airtight and /or cannot be washed
- Breads, cakes, cookies, candies, bulk foods, flour, sugar, and similar items not packaged in sealed containers
- Food products in containers with screw caps, snap-lids, crimped caps, twist caps, flip tops, snap open and similar-type closures. Debris and contaminants in the water may lodge under the cap lids, threads, lugs, crimps, and snap-rings, making them virtually impossible to detect and remove.

**Hermetically-sealed cans** in good condition may be reconditioned and re-labeled under strict, controlled procedures if:

- The product is not contaminated
- Surface rust can be removed by buffing and rust has not caused pitting
- Denting has not affected the seam or rim
- The ends of the can have not bulged
- The can is not leaking
- There was no exposure to extreme temperatures

To recondition:

- Inspect cans
- Mark end of can with name of food using a water resistant marker
- Remove labels
- Wash cans in warm water with detergent, rinse the containers in potable water
- Buff cans to remove rust
- Soak cans for at least one minute in a chlorine solution of 200ppm
- Allow thorough drying; do not stack
- Re-label

## The Structure

- Cavities in walls, floors, and ceilings must be opened, cleaned, decontaminated and thoroughly dried
- Most plaster and wallboard that contacts flood water must be discarded
- Discard absorbent floor coverings like linoleum, tile, and carpet
- Scrub all walls with water, detergent and sanitizer
- Discard ceiling tile or other absorbent contaminated materials

## Equipment

- Thoroughly clean and sanitize all equipment that can be salvaged  
Use caution on equipment with electrical components
- Clean and sanitize all dishes, glassware, and utensils

**WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!**

Instruct the facility to keep a log of all food and equipment that is discarded. Secure the damaged merchandise and equipment until disposal. Send to an approved disposal site. Keep a receipt of disposal.